



CITY OF COVENTRY.

THE HEALTH OF THE CITY IN 1939.

AN INTERIM REPORT

by

A. MASSEY, M.D., D.P.H., D.P.A.

Medical Officer of Health.

GENERAL STATISTICS.

Area of City in acres	19,167.
Estimated Population (mid. 1939)	234,000.
Number of inhabited dwellings (Dec. 1939)	65,348.
Rateable Value of City	£1,634,883.
Sum represented by a penny rate	£6,356.

"

Live Births :-	<u>Males.</u>	<u>Females.</u>	<u>Total.</u>	
Legitimate	2091	1981	4072.	
Illegitimate.	39	44	83.	
	<u>2130.</u>	<u>2025.</u>	<u>4155.</u>	=

Birth Rate (uncorrected) of 17.7 per 1000
of estimated population.

Deaths :-

<u>Males.</u>	<u>Females.</u>	<u>Total.</u>	
1199	1009	2208	=

Death Rate of 9.4 per 1000 of estimated
population.

Death Rate of Infants under one year of age :-

- (a) All infants per 1000 live births ... 54.6
- (b) Legitimate infants per 1000
legitimate births ... 53.0
- (c) Illegitimate infants per 1000
illegitimate births ... 132.0

"

To: The Right Worshipful The Mayor, Aldermen and Councillors of the City of Coventry.

Mr. Mayor, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have pleasure in submitting herewith my Annual Report on the state of the public health in Coventry during 1939. The report is drastically curtailed on account of war conditions, and is in fact merely an interim statement as required by Ministry of Health Circular 2067 of July 19th, 1940. Nevertheless the full records and statistical tables relating to the work last year have been preserved for future inclusion in a comprehensive report covering the war years which will be prepared and published after the termination of hostilities.

In my 1938 Report, reference was made to a growing task in connection with the organization of civil defence casualty services. This important work expanded progressively in 1939, and since the outbreak of war the new service has been an urgent and primary departmental responsibility. In this connection, the first impact of war of necessity entailed a contraction of the routine medical and health services. Clinics were used as first-aid posts. Welfare centres were suspended to obviate the air-raid risks attaching to aggregations of women and children. The general hospitals were partially voided to provide empty beds in readiness for civil casualties. The expected early raids did not materialise, however, and at the year-end alternative arrangements had been completed whereby virtually all normal medical services were restored - happily without detriment to the civil defence side.

SOCIAL CONDITIONS. Coventry is pre-eminently a centre of the engineering industry, and war-time expansion has brought momentous social problems in train. The pre-war growth of the city, considerable though it was, has now been further accelerated. The Corporation is making the most commendable efforts in the matter of new housing provision. But meanwhile there is a shortage of artizan accommodation and acute difficulty in regard to lodgings. Some degree of overcrowding is thus inevitable.

The large factory population - and many in other spheres - are working at high pressure in the war effort. Despite this and the superadded black-out conditions there is no evidence as to any resultant prevalence of ill-health or "nervos."

The estimated City population at mid 1939 was 234,000 and at the time of writing it is about 250,000. Based on the former figure, the city death-rate in 1939 was 9.4 and the birth rate 17.7. These figures compare with 9.5 and 16.5 respectively in 1938. Last year the infant mortality rate was 54.6 per thousand births as compared with 56.0 the year before.

INFECTIOUS AND OTHER DISEASES. The outstanding feature last year under this heading was the prevalence of scarlet fever. The disease was mild in type and complications were rare. Notifications during 1939 included the following:- scarlet fever 831, diphtheria 277, acute primary pneumonia 219, acute influenzal pneumonia 40, puerperal pyrexia 57, ophthalmia neonatorum 19, enteric fever 4, cerebro-spinal meningitis 11 and acute anterior poliomyelitis 3. In the City Isolation Hospital 1,139 patients were treated during the year as compared with 807 in 1938.

There were 255 deaths locally from cancer last year giving a cancer death-rate of 1.09 as against 1.17 in the previous year.

The 1939 returns of the venereal diseases treatment centre did not indicate any increased local incidence of these infections consequent upon war conditions.

The local incidence of and death-rate from tuberculosis have in general continued a downward course. At the year-end there were 1,146 cases of the disease (all forms) on the local live register, and 308 new cases were notified during the year. On December 31st 1939 there were 114 Coventry cases in the Memorial Sanatorium, Hertford Hill, and 204 city cases were admitted there during the year.

MUNICIPAL GENERAL HOSPITAL. The Gulson Road Hospital is one of the two local casualty clearing hospitals in the City's civil defence scheme, and

during the year under review all preparations were completed at the hospital in this connection. During 1939, 3,806 cases received treatment in the hospital as compared with 4,577 in 1938. The reduced number last year is of course explained by the necessity for maintaining a state of readiness in connection with the reception of possible air raid casualties.

MATERNITY AND CHILD WELFARE. Cases dealt with by the municipal midwives during the year numbered 2,174. This figure represents 75% of all domiciliary births and 53% of all births in the city. The figure for the previous year was 1,567. The increase in 1939 is partly accounted for by the diversion of cases from hospital to domiciliary practice due to the temporary closure of the hospital maternity units during the early weeks of war. This is of course also reflected in the hospital maternity figures viz :- 942 cases in 1939 as against 1,293 in 1938.

The attendances at the sixteen city welfare centres during 1939 totalled 56,650 as compared with 72,769 the previous year. The smaller number last year was due to the temporary closure of centres at the onset of hostilities.

The new demands for female labour in local war industries are such that the question of day nurseries has assumed rightful prominence, and the matter is under active consideration at the time of writing.

SANITARY CIRCUMSTANCES. In previous reports reference has been made to the important public health potentialities of the Sowe Valley Sower scheme. During the year this has permitted of further progress in the abolition of small sowage works in connection with new housing estates in the Sowe Valley drainage area. At the year-end a commencement had been made on the Binley branch sewer. The laying of the Walsgrave branch sewer has been unavoidably deferred.

WATER SUPPLIES. The laboratory reports on the city's water supply during the year have continued to indicate its excellent quality. The demands on the water undertaking have increased steeply in recent

years owing to wide local building developments. Just prior to the outbreak of war, Parliamentary sanction was given to a large-scale scheme for taking water from the River Severn. This scheme, however, has been held up by the war, but sanction has since been obtained for a smaller immediate scheme giving a supply from the nearby River Avon. This will greatly augment the existing supplies and will adequately tide over the intervening years before the Severn scheme can be resumed and completed.

CONCLUSION. The war has forced a temporary suspension of many cherished ideals in the sphere of social reform. The cessation of slum clearance is a case in point. Although current conditions may preclude new schemes, it must nevertheless be our aim to hold on firmly to the substantial gains already made in the public health field.

Again it is a privilege to acknowledge the assistance given at all times during the year by the Chairman and Members of the Public Health Committee. Big demands were made upon all members of my staff during a difficult year, and I have pleasure in recording the loyalty and readiness with which they invariably responded.

I am, Mr. Mayor, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

A. MASSEY.

Medical Officer of Health.

The Council House,
COVENTRY.

31st July, 1940.

VITAL STATISTICS OF CITY DURING 1939 AND PREVIOUS YEARS.

Year.	Population estimated to middle of each year.	BIRTHS.			TOTAL DEATHS REGISTERED IN THE CITY.		TRANSFERABLE DEATHS.		NETT DEATH BELONGING TO THE CITY.			
		Un- corrected number.	Nett.		Number.	Rate.	of Non- residents registered in the City.	of Resi- dents not registered in the City.	Under 1 year of Age.		At all ages.	
			Number.	Rate.					Number.	Rate per 1,000 Nett Births.	Number.	Rate.
1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	13.
1934.	184,900.	2585.	2521.	13.6	1865.	10.0	125.	116.	144.	57.1	1856.	10.0
1935.	190,000.	2843.	2750.	14.4	1852.	9.7	120.	112.	128.	46.5	1844.	9.7
1936.	192,360.	3009.	2912.	15.1	1960.	10.1	100.	101.	151.	51.8	1961.	10.1
1937.	206,500.	3306.	3254.	15.7	2154.	10.4	126.	128.	158.	48.5	2156.	10.4
1938.	219,900.	3724.	3624.	16.5	2074.	9.4	139.	156.	203.	56.0	2091.	9.5
1939.	234,000.	4155.	-	17.7 [≠]	2179.	9.3 ⁺	100.	129.	227.	54.6	2208.	9.4

≠ Uncorrected rate.

+ Calculated on Departmental estimate of population.

